

# Backwater Blues

Bessie Smith

When it rains five days, and the skies turn dark as night, when it

*simile* *ad lib.*

The first system of musical notation for 'Backwater Blues' is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a steady bass line and a treble line with a triplet of eighth notes at the beginning. The lyrics are: 'When it rains five days, and the skies turn dark as night, when it'. The first measure has a '3' above a triplet of eighth notes. The second measure has the word 'simile' written below it. The system ends with a fermata over the final note and the instruction 'ad lib.' above the staff.

rains five days, and the skies turn dark as night, there's

*ad lib.*

The second system of musical notation continues the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'rains five days, and the skies turn dark as night, there's'. The system ends with a fermata over the final note and the instruction 'ad lib.' above the staff.

trouble taking place in the lowlands that night.

1. *ad lib.* 2.

The third system of musical notation concludes the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'trouble taking place in the lowlands that night.'. The system ends with a double bar line and two first endings. The first ending is marked '1. ad lib.' and the second ending is marked '2.'. Both endings lead to a final chord.

I woke up this mornin', can't even get out of my door,  
There's been enough trouble to make a poor girl wonder where she wants to go.

Then they rowed a little boat about five miles 'cross the pond,  
I packed all my clothes threwed them in and they rowed me along.

When it thunders and lightnin' and when the wind begins to blow,  
There's thousands of people ain't got no place to go.

Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill,  
Then looked down on the house where I used to live.

Backwater blues done call me to pack my things and go  
'Cause my house fell down and I can't live there no more.

I can't move no more, I can't move no more,  
There ain't no place for a poor old girl to go.